



Deputy Administrator

Baltimore, MD 21244-1850

SEP 22 2008

The Honorable Dennis Kucinich
Chairman, Domestic Policy Subcommittee
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Kucinich:

Thank you for your letter of September 19, 2008 sharing the findings of your staff and the Congressional Research Service (CRS) on the under-utilization of dental health services for children in Medicaid who are enrolled in certain Managed Care Organizations (MCOs).

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is grateful to you and your staff for developing and providing this information. As you and I discussed during our meeting in May, I share your conviction that we must improve dental health care. I also share your desire that CMS and the Congress – and most importantly, the States who manage these programs – need to continue our joint efforts to improve the delivery of dental care for children in the Medicaid program. This important report is further evidence of that partnership, and we plan to take full measure of your findings.

In this regard, I believe the efforts of your staff and CRS provide a very important addition to our review of seventeen State dental programs. That report, which we expect will be completed shortly, looks at the various issues resulting in low dental coverage and utilization rates. One of the factors we identified is risk based contracting. Ultimately, this report will serve as the basis for our comprehensive effort to evaluate State performance, develop new policy options, and establish new accountability and performance metrics to be used by the States in the management of their dental programs.

To make sure the new information you are providing us is included in our evaluation, we need your assistance to help us obtain the additional data and analysis you used in developing your study. This will be critical to us as we evaluate and identify both strengths and weaknesses in managed care contracting. While we have had less than one working day to review your report, we have identified several important issues. In this regard, we believe, at a minimum, the following information will be instrumental to us in evaluating your report:

1. You noted that a relatively small number of providers accounted for a large share of the paid dental claims. It is unclear as to whether the providers you referenced are individual providers performing a larger than expected number of services or if the provider is a group practice with multiple providers providing services through the one group.
2. It is not clear if the Subcommittee finds it an objectionable practice for providers to specialize in Medicaid services or services for children and adults with special needs (as the one plan cited as *Special Smiles Limited*) and thus, provide more services than other providers in the local area.
3. You referenced a provider network survey that revealed inaccuracy in provider listings. While you have provided summary findings, the specific inaccuracies were not identified for the health plans reviewed. It would be helpful if we could receive more information on your findings to accurately respond.

I look forward to continuing our partnership with you and the Subcommittee so that together we can ensure better oral health care for the children covered under the Medicaid program. Our Office of Legislation will be in contact with your staff regarding these questions and additional information that could assist us in our evaluation.

Thank you again for your important leadership in this area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Herb B. Kuhn", with a stylized, flowing script.

Herb B. Kuhn
Deputy Administrator
Acting Director, Center for Medicaid
and State Operations

cc:
Darrell Issa
Ranking Minority Member